

could be a huge and unnecessary financial burden.

I did feel it was important to clarify those three points. There is much else I could say about this issue, but I recognize that undoubtedly the Presiding Officer and others are eager to get to the briefing.

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess subject to the call of the Chair.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 5:05 p.m., recessed subject to the call of the Chair and reassembled at 6:25 p.m. when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PERDUE).

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The majority leader.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the Collins substitute amendment No. 2812.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Senate amendment No. 2812, the substitute amendment to H.R. 2577, an act making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Susan M. Collins, Jerry Moran, John Boozman, Steve Daines, John Hoeven, Cory Gardner, Dan Sullivan, Joni Ernst, Daniel Coats, Johnny Isakson, Orrin G. Hatch, Lamar Alexander, Mike Crapo, Richard Burr, Shelley Moore Capito, Michael B. Enzi.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. I send a cloture motion to the desk for the underlying bill, H.R. 2577.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Calendar No. 138, H.R. 2577, an act making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Susan M. Collins, Jerry Moran, John Boozman, Steve

Daines, John Hoeven, Cory Gardner, Dan Sullivan, Daniel Coats, Johnny Isakson, Orrin G. Hatch, Lamar Alexander, Mike Crapo, Richard Burr, Shelley Moore Capito, Michael B. Enzi, Joni Ernst.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call under rule XXII with respect to the cloture motions be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I wish to speak about an amendment I plan on offering tomorrow to the Transportation bill we are working on right now on the Senate floor. It is a common-sense amendment. It is an amendment about safety. It is an amendment about protecting our citizens. It is an amendment about cutting through redtape. It is an amendment about what the vast majority of Americans want us to do in the Senate, which is to start to get things done in this body. It is a simple amendment.

This is what my amendment does. It would allow States and communities throughout this country of ours the ability to expedite the Federal permitting process, the regulatory process on the construction and rebuilding of bridges. It is pretty simple. It doesn't get much more simple than that.

Everybody needs infrastructure. Every community in America needs bridges. It would only apply to bridges—critical pieces of infrastructure—bridges that are built in the same place, the same size, bridges that in the United States are falling apart.

We have talked about this on the Senate floor for the last several months. Our Nation's infrastructure is crumbling. The American Society of Civil Engineers gives America's infrastructure a D-plus. We are failing. For our infrastructure, in the classroom, we are the D-plus students.

This is, of course, bad for our Nation's economy. There is nothing more central to a country that wants to grow its economy, that wants to compete globally, than sound infrastructure for transportation. In a country of our size facing economic challenges, America's infrastructure can either drive growth and opportunity or it can slow down growth and opportunity and undermine it. Right now, that is what we are doing. We are slowing it down. We are undermining it. It is worse than that. It is worse than just undermining our own economic opportunity. The state of our infrastructure is actually dangerous for our citizens.

I agree that we must have stable funding for infrastructure. That is why I have been a strong supporter of the DRIVE Act and this bill, in terms of a 6-year highway bill, under the DRIVE Act. But we also need to focus on something else that is driving up the cost of our Nation's infrastructure: redtape that is stopping critical projects in America from moving forward. Like so

many construction projects in this country, the environmental review process our bridges face is deathly slow and cumbersome and enormously expensive. We live in a redtape nation, particularly when it comes to infrastructure. We can't build the way we used to in this country.

Consider just a few statistics. The average time for environmental reviews for a major transportation project in the United States in 2011 was 8 years. That is up from 3½ years just 10 years earlier. The average environmental impact statement when NEPA was written was 22 pages. Now the average environmental impact statement is over 1,000 pages.

Let me give one example that came up in the Commerce Committee. We were talking about airport infrastructure—again, critical to the country. Seattle had built a new runway. When I asked the witness who was in charge of that runway how long it took to build, he said 3 years. That is a pretty long time, but it is a big runway, kind of complicated. Then I asked how long it took to get the Federal permits and regulatory permission from the Federal Government to build that new runway. The answer: 15 years. Fifteen years. The entire room gasped.

No American wants this. We need to do a lot more to get back to common-sense permitting and regulatory reform for America's infrastructure.

So we are starting on critical pieces of infrastructure that everybody can agree with. That is what this amendment does. It focuses solely on bridges. Our bridges are an increasingly important issue. One in 10 of our Nation's bridges—roughly 607,000 bridges in the United States—is structurally insufficient. Let me repeat that in a different way. In the United States, there are more than 600,000 bridges in need of repair. The average age of our bridges is 42 years old. So we need to repair them. We need to rebuild them. But what we don't need is the Federal Government taking 6 to 7 or 8 to 9 years to give us permission to rebuild bridges. There is not one American who thinks that would be a good idea. Yet, if we keep the law the same, that is exactly what is going to happen.

Communities need to rebuild bridges, and it is going to take several years to get permission from agencies in this town to allow them to do it. To do what? To build on the same land, to just build a bridge. We need to change that.

Thousands of communities across the country are simply keeping their fingers crossed when Americans cross structurally deficient bridges 215 million times a day. Let me repeat that. In this great country, Americans cross structurally deficient bridges 215 million times a day. So we need to fix them. They are being crossed by our trucks, carrying our Nation's commerce, our children in schoolbuses, parents trying to get home in time for dinner. These are people we should be protecting.